

## Pandemic Flu, Hospice and Palliative Care Fast Facts Brochure

What is a pandemic?

A pandemic takes place when a new strain of disease evolves moves rapidly throughout the world with a relatively high mortality rate. Because a pandemic involves an entirely new strain of disease, most people will not have immunity against it.

Pandemic influenza differs from seasonal influenza in that seasonal influenza occurs each year, and there is a vaccine that has been developed to help protect people against it. Pandemic influenza is a new strain of influenza for which there is not yet a vaccine against. This makes it unlikely that people have any sort of immunity against it. Seasonal influenza is caused by a disease strain that is only minimally different from strains in previous years; therefore most people have already been exposed to it and have some degree of immune response against it.

What are hospice and palliative care, and how can they help me in a pandemic?

While hospice and palliative have many differences, they can both help you in a pandemic situation. The differences in the two forms of care are outlined below:

### Hospice

- Prognosis of 6 months or less
- Focus on comfort care rather than curative treatment
- Medicare hospice benefit
- Interdisciplinary team of health care professionals
- Majority of hospice care is provided in the home, but can also take place in nursing homes or inpatient hospice facilities
- If hospice is being provided in the home, any acute issues are addressed by a nurse, social worker, or physician visit to the home.

### Palliative Care

- Can be started any time during illness
- Focus on relief of symptoms and suffering that may be combined with curative treatment
- Not payer specific
- Interdisciplinary team of health care professionals
- Employed in the acute hospital setting as well as some nursing homes and outpatient settings

- While still living at home, patients may be seen as outpatients in a palliative care clinic in order to provide continued assessment and management of their symptoms.

In a pandemic situation, hospice or palliative care can provide the following support to patients and families:

- Provide the patient and family with information about hospice and palliative care services, benefits and eligibility requirements
- Evaluate and address immediate patient treatment and care management requirements
- Offer the patient/family a choice about care options with specific reference to hospice and palliative care services
- Assess prognosis to determine whether palliative care and/or hospice services best suit patient and family needs and preferences and if appropriate, call for a hospice consultation
- Provide symptom management, psycho-social and spiritual support if hospice is elected as the care manager. These services can be provided in the hospital, in a nursing home and/or in the home
- Provide on-going treatment interventions including curative therapies and comfort care in collaboration with the referring physician if that physician is available
- Provide symptom management and comfort care in collaboration with the hospice team if hospice is elected until such time as the patient is discharged from the hospital and/or dies
- Facilitate discharge to a community-based setting if the patient condition allows a transfer
- Facilitate transition to an alternative care provider if the patient condition improves and hospice is no longer appropriate

For more information about hospice and palliative care, contact the Hospice and Palliative Care Association of New York State at 518-446-1483, or visit our website: [www.hpcanys.org](http://www.hpcanys.org)